

Tiny Broadwick

General Overview

Tiny Broadwick was a daring young woman who parachuted for the first time from a hot air balloon in 1908. She was fifteen years old. During her lifetime she made over 1100 jumps from balloons and airplanes.

Lesson Objectives

Students should be able to

1. Explain Tiny Broadwick's importance to aviation
2. Discuss some of the impediments to Broadwick's
3. Discuss the differences in advertising today and in the early 1900s
4. Explain why it is important to archive materials related to famous North Carolinians.

Preparation

Students should read the information provided about Tiny Broadwick. They should do additional internet searches for more information about her. Students should read the advertising letter Charles Broadwick wrote.

Activities

After doing some research on Tiny Broadwick, students should discuss her life and accomplishments. The following questions should provoke discussion.

1. What kinds of discrimination, if any, did Tiny Broadwick face?
2. Why was what she did considered so radical?
3. In 1908 what do you think was the perception of a woman joining a carnival?
4. What were the dangers Broadwick faced in jumping from a hot air balloon?
5. Why did Charles Broadwick use letters to advertise his act?
6. What advertising techniques did he employ in the letter?
7. Why do you think interest in flying exhibitions dropped after World War I?

After studying the photographs of Broadwick, discuss how different such activities are today from the early 1900s.

Enrichment and Extension

1. Using the short biography of Broadwick and doing additional research on the internet, construct a timeline of the woman's life.
2. Broadside were another common means of advertising in the early part of the 20th Century. Research broadsides, then create one to advertise a jump by Broadwick.

Sources

Roberson, Elizabeth Whitley. *Tiny Broadwick: The First Lady of Parachuting*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2001.

P.C.1567.1 Tiny Broadwick Papers. North Carolina State Archives.

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Our State Magazine, January 2004.

The State Magazine, January 1975.

The State Magazine, December 1, 1945.

Tiny Broadwick

Georgia Ann Thompson was born 1893 in Granville County, North Carolina. She was the seventh and youngest daughter of George and Emma Ross Thompson. As an infant she was very small, weighing only three pounds when she was born. For that reason she was called "Tiny". She remained small even as an adult, topping out at a little over 4 feet tall and weighing 80 pounds.

When she was age 6 the family moved to Henderson in Vance County. Ms. Thompson's early life was difficult both as a child and in early adulthood. In 1905 she married William A. Jacobs and had one daughter in 1906. Her husband abandoned her shortly thereafter.

In 1907 Thompson attended the North Carolina State Fair and saw an aerial show that featured Charles Broadwick. He parachuted from a hot air balloon. She was determined to join his act. Leaving her daughter with her mother, the young woman joined the Johnny J. Jones Carnival and Broadwick's act, Broadwick's World Famous Aeronauts.

On 1908 Tiny Broadwick made her first jump at the North Carolina State Fair. She loved it even though she landed in a blackberry bush.

Charles Broadwick emphasized Thompson's small size and dressed her in girlish clothes and curled her hair in ringlets. He billed her as "the Doll Girl." When she was interviewed later in life Thompson said that she hated being dressed up like a doll. She had been a tomboy all her life and just did not like to dress up.

After she joined the act, Charles Broadwick adopted her and her name was legally changed to Tiny Broadwick.

In order to jump out of the balloon Tiny Broadwick had to sit on a trapeze that hung from the bottom and jump off when the correct altitude was reached. Her parachute would open and she would float to the ground to the delight of the crowd below. The young woman had numerous falls and rough landings but, although she broke some bones and dislocated her shoulder a few times, she was never seriously injured.

In 1912 the Broadwicks met Glenn L. Martin in Los Angeles. Martin was a barnstormer, a person who traveled around doing stunt flying at carnivals and fairs. He asked if Ms. Broadwick would be willing to parachute from his airplane. In 1913, on June 21, she did so for the first time. She was the first woman to parachute from a plane. The parachute she used was one patented by Charles Broadwick. Later that year she became the first woman to jump from a hydroplane and land in Lake Michigan.

After 1914 and the coming of World War I there was a sharp decrease in interest in flying exhibitions. Tiny and Charles Broadwick broke up the act.

In 1912 Tiny Broadwick married Andrew Olsen but the marriage did not work. During this time she continued to do exhibition jumping in California. She married Harry Brown in 1916. He did not approve of her parachuting and left her in 1920.

In 1922 Broadwick made her last jump. During World War II she worked in Rohr Aircraft Company. After the war she continued to live in California, although she came home to North Carolina for visits.

In 1953 she received the US Government Pioneer Aviation Award and in 1964 the John Glenn Medal. She was inducted into the OX5 Hall of Fame along with Orville and Wilbur Wright, Charles Lindbergh and Glenn Martin. She received the Gold Wings of the Adventurer's Club in Los Angeles. It commemorated 1000 jumps. During her lifetime she actually did over 1100 jumps. She also joined the Early Birds of Aviation. This group only allowed people to join if they had flown solo before December 17, 1916. In 1976 she received the wings of the 82nd Airborne and became an honorary member.

Tiny Broadwick died at age 85 on August 25, 1978 in California. She was returned to Henderson, North Carolina for burial in the Sunset Gardens Cemetery.